

REMARKS

Claim 2 has been cancelled. Claims 1,4,7,9 and 11-16 have been amended. Claims 1 and 3-16 remain in the application. Reexamination and reconsideration of the application, as amended, are respectfully requested.

Claims 1-3, 7-8, 13 and 15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Yamashita (US 5,873,009). Claims 4-6, 9-12, 14 and 16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yamashita and further in view of Yacoub (US 6,552,813). These rejections are respectfully traversed with respect to claims 1 and 3-16, as amended.

The present invention, as defined by the amended claims, comprises a number of elements in combination. For example, representative claim 1, as amended, recites a management system comprising a printing machine, a management apparatus and a maintenance terminal connected over an external network. The management apparatus stores a value indicating the number of printouts permitted during a predetermined period in association with the printing machine. Usage information generated by the printing machine includes information on the number-of-printouts, indicating the number of sheets printed during the printing operation. The management apparatus determines whether or not the printing machine requires preventive maintenance based on a computed actual number of printouts in the predetermined period. The determination is made based on (a) the number-of-printouts information included in the use information sent from the printing machine and (b) the threshold value memorized by the management apparatus.

A similar combination of elements is neither disclosed nor suggested by Yamashita. Yamashita discloses a copier that increments the total count of copies when a sensor detects the passage of sheets. However, Yamashita fails to disclose or suggest computing the total number of printouts in a predetermined period, based on the number of printouts counted by the copier.

Yamashita discloses (column 8, line 67 to column 9, line 8) that the host computer H calculates the rates of incrementing based on the average counts per day, even when there is no communication between the apparatus D and the host computer H. However, presumably the count stored in the apparatus D is not sent to the host computer H at the time the average count per day is calculated, because there is no communication between the apparatus D and the host computer H. Consequently, Yamashita does not calculate the number of outputs in a predetermined period based

on the number-of-printout information. Therefore, Yamashita cannot compute the actual number of printouts in a week or in a month, though it can obtain a predictive value.

In contrast to Yamashita, the present invention includes a management apparatus that determines whether or not the printing machine requires preventive maintenance based on a computed actual number of printouts in a predetermined period from (a) the number-of-printouts information included in the use information sent from the printing machine and (b) the threshold value memorized by the management apparatus. A similar combination of elements is neither disclosed nor suggested in Yamashita, viewed alone or in combination with other prior art.

In view of the above, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the outstanding rejection of the claims and to pass this application to issue. If it is determined that a telephone conference would expedite the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number given below.

In the event the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office determines that an extension and/or other relief is required, applicant petitions for any required relief including extensions of time and authorizes the Commissioner to charge the cost of such petitions and/or other fees due in connection with the filing of this document to Deposit Account No. 03-1952 referencing docket no. 116692005500.

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